

Melrose BID Security Ambassador Program

Program Description

The adopted Management District Plan (“MDP”) defines the services that the Melrose BID shall provide:

“The District will provide the following improvements, activities, and services as consistent with the provisions of the State Law: (i) ambassador / security services; (ii) landscaping, sanitation, and beautification; (iii) marketing and promotions; (iv) new business attraction; and, (v) policy development, district management, and administration. In addition, overhead resources to support those direct improvements, activities, and services will be provided through office, insurance, accounting, and other costs line items and an uncollected assessment reserve line item. These services are described in greater detail below.” See MDP, page 10.

The MDP further describes the Security Ambassador Program as follows:

“The purpose of the Ambassador / Security Services Program, which is described below, is to provide a readily identifiable, uniformed presence serving each individually assessed parcel by observing and responding to needs of those parcels. Ambassadors / security officers will create the appearance of safety of each individually assessed parcel, which will enhance the comfort level of customers, employees, visitors, owners and tenants as they enter, move through, leave, and travel between those parcels, thereby stimulating the quality of their shopping / business experience and contributing to an improved business climate and economic vitality that specially and individually benefits those parcels. This standard of service is higher than would exist with only baseline City services.

Ambassadors / security officers may operate via foot patrols, bicycle, or vehicle, as deemed appropriate by the Owner’s Association. These personnel provide directions or assistance; serve as a liaison to the City’s police, City Attorney, and other services; coordinate the provision of homeless services; warn and advise trespassers; and, respond to visitor inquiries. Ambassadors will be deployed at such times and in such a manner as the District deems most effective and efficient to achieve their purpose. This practice will allow for cost savings when service needs are diminished or not present. For the purpose of establishing a budget estimate, 60 hours per week of a single unarmed contract ambassador / security officer has been projected.

The Melrose business improvement district may contract for the provision of parking management services or the coordination of such services in order to achieve Ambassador / Security Program purposes.

The Melrose business improvement district may also contract for the provision of services or the coordination of services for the homeless in order to achieve Ambassador / Security Program purposes. The District could contract with a greater Los Angeles area non-profit organization, People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), to achieve this goal. For the purpose of establishing a budget estimate, a \$7,500 annual contract for such services has been projected.

Ambassador / Security Program services will specially and individually benefit each assessed parcel in the District in a particular and distinct manner because services will be provided for each such parcel. No improvements, activities, or services will be provided outside of the District's boundaries (or north of the alley north of Melrose Avenue or south of the alley south of Melrose Avenue)." See MDP, page 11–12.

II. Historical Background

At their April 8, 2016 Board meeting, the Melrose Business Improvement Association (MBIA) approved the proposal presented by Critical Solutions Protective Services Group (CSPSG) for Security Ambassador Services and authorized the Executive Director to implement these services immediately and execute an appropriate contract that provided a 30-day cancellation. Services pursuant to this action began Saturday, April 9.

The backstory is instructive. Homeless issues within the District had long generated complaints / service requests from business and property owners. During the Melrose BID's initial year of operations, the extreme example of this problem was, perhaps, the encampment, including an open fire that was found on the roof of a prominent Melrose restaurant. LAPD was not effective in responding for many reasons including a lack of resources, the absence of an available municipal solution, the relative low priority of the complaints, homeless advocate litigation, etc. During the Melrose BID's second / third years of operations, after the effective date of Proposition 47, homeless problems / services requests became more numerous and featured increasingly aberrant and aggressive behavior towards business and property owners, customers, and visitors. Many were expressing fear for their personal safety and extreme discomfort while working, shopping, and visiting in the Melrose area. Fire danger was a real concern. Large semi-permanent encampments expanded in the alleys behind Melrose businesses and resisted cleanup or homeless services solutions. One encampment in the alley on the north side of

Melrose between Vista and Martel required debris cleanup totaling more than 60 cubic yards. After that cleanup, the encampment moved to the NWC of Gardner and Melrose and grew to similar size. When that site was remediated, the encampment moved to the alley on the south side of Melrose between Spaulding and Stanley and required a cleanup that totaled more than 40 cubic yards including 3 stolen motor cycles and drug paraphernalia. The most recent and hopefully last iteration of this encampment occurred on the north side of Melrose between Poinsettia and Alta Vista on the business frontage! During this time, increasing violent encounters with homeless individuals became more common. A sneaker shop was trashed and its employees threatened on the west end of the BID area. A property owner complained that he was assaulted at his property on the north side of Melrose between Mansfield and Citrus and that LAPD did not respond despite his numerous calls for service. (He felt it necessary to hire special security to protect his valuable real estate investment after that confrontation.) Employees and customers of the new bank anchor tenant at the SEC of Melrose and La Brea were repeatedly threatened and their operations disrupted by an individual that was also reported to be exposing himself to children of the school south of that location. Consistently, LAPD responses were not effective in resolving the problem, which in turn grew worse with this prominent gateway to the Melrose BID business area becoming notable for a train of four to eight shopping carts that obstructed the sidewalk and bus bench on a continual basis. The volumes of debris and sanitary issues associated with this location were also serious problems. Clearly, decisive action was required to preserve business and property values and revitalize Melrose Avenue.

The Melrose BID requested a proposal from Andrews International, which is the security services firm employed by the Hollywood Entertainment District (HED) and Sunset & Vine BID (S&V BID). After careful consideration Andrews quoted the cost of a 2-person security ambassador team of about \$160,000 per year and 2, 2-person security ambassador teams of about \$260,000 per year. Ultimately, Andrews declined to consider providing services to the Melrose BID “because they could not provide backup sufficient to mitigate, in their opinion, the potential danger that their personnel would potentially be subject to while on Melrose patrol.”

The Melrose BID also requested a proposal from Universal Protection Service (UPS), which is the security services firm employed by the Hollywood Media District (HMD). After first presenting an \$80,000 per year cost for a one-person security ambassador team, UPS back tracked to a \$99,000 per year cost, which was simply beyond the Melrose BID’s budget capacity.

Finally Critical Solutions Protective Services Group (CSPSG) was identified as a competent security services firm. CSPSG agreed to provide a one-person security ambassador patrol to the Melrose BID for about \$6,720 per 4-week month with a 30-day cancellation clause. At their April 8, 2016 MBIA Board meeting this proposal was unanimously approved. Patrol services started on April 9, 2016.

The good news is that Security Ambassador services have made a noticeable difference in the weeks since its initiation. The focus of the initial efforts has been to introduce the business community to the new Melrose BID Security Ambassador; to provide appropriate training, uniform, identification, and bicycle to the Security Ambassador; and, to implement an online closed business communications network. All of this has been accomplished. The Melrose BID Security Ambassador has been personally introducing himself to business and property owners and their employees; LAPD Sr. Lead Officers and Patrol Officers; Pastor Weller's Homeless Taskforce; and, other stakeholders. Homeless individuals have been placed with social service providers that will hopefully provide permanent solutions. Others have been contacted and asked to relocate. The problems at the gateway corner of La Brea and Melrose seem to have come under control. Business and property owner complaints about student loitering and disruptive activities across from Fairfax High School are being resolved through on-going discussions involving the Security Ambassador, a local property owner, Fairfax High administrators, and LA School Police. A Facebook based closed business communications network is evolving. There is still much more to be done.

In the coming months the Security Ambassador's efforts will be guided by the following specific performance objectives:

III. Specific Objectives

1. Provide 40-hours per week of Security Ambassador patrol on-foot and/or bicycle featuring the following elements:
 - Flexible scheduling to meet service needs;
 - On-going personal contacts with businesses, customers, and visitors on-the-street and inside the stores;
 - On-going personal contacts with LAPD patrol officers;
 - Serve as "eyes and ears" for LAPD regarding any criminal activity;
 - Regular communication / coordination with Melrose BID area LAPD Sr. Lead Officers;
 - Regular communication / coordination with Pastor Weller's Homeless Task Force;
 - Active identification and reporting of streetscape maintenance needs including graffiti, stickers, bulk items for pick up, sidewalk clean-ups, trash pick-ups, etc.;
 - Active identification, communication with, and reporting of homeless individuals in need of services;
 - Aggressively deter sidewalk vendors from operating in the Melrose BID area;
 - Aggressively discourage regular food truck vending from operating in the Melrose BID area;
 - Proactive crime prevention through a physical presence in a manner that does not endanger personal safety;

2. Serve as moderator of the Melrose Business Group Facebook page.
 - Initiate regular communications with individual Group members.
 - Prepare and distribute regular “Security Ambassador Weekly Alerts.”
3. Outreach communications to adjacent residential neighbors and collection of contact information.
 - Possible alley cleanup cooperation;
 - Possible alley improvement collaboration;
 - Homeless needs communication;
 - Crime prevention collaboration;
 - Melrose BID services communication;
4. Melrose BID News distribution to businesses.
5. Melrose BID security ambassador sticker distribution.
6. Decorative trash receptacle plaque maintenance.
7. Possible pedestrian intercept survey administration.
8. Outreach with Executive Director and LAPD Sr. Lead Officer with M2 Rehabilitation facility at north side of Melrose between Mansfield and Citrus.
 - Parking issues resolution;
 - Appearance of loitering on Melrose frontage; can a rear patio area be established?
9. Prepare an updated list of marijuana stores operating on Melrose for submission to the City’s Neighborhood Prosecutor for evaluation / resolution.
10. Circulate petitions needed by DOT for on-street parking modifications as required for implementation of the Civic Enterprise Associates study.
11. Seize other opportunities as they arise.